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THE CAT WHO CLIMBED THE MATTERHORN.

The exploit of Mitza, the cat who climbed the Matterhorn by accident, is still being discussed by tough Alpine climbers on both sides of the mountains. Mitza, who is seven months old, belongs to Josephine who works as a cook in a hotel at the foot of the Matterhorn.

'The hotel', explained DAVID DE KRASSEL in a talk in 'The Eye witness', 'which is the last outpost of civilisation at the foot of the Matterhorn, is the usual starting point for parties attempting to climb the mountain. Thus the kitten has watched many dawn departures from her hotel home, and has heard many queer stories of mountain adventures from the guides who never fail to visit Josephine in her kitchen when their employers stop at the Belvedere. Thus perhaps it is not surprising that Mitza decided one day to see for herself where it was that all her human friends went, and who knows what dreams she may have had of a mouse El Dorado as she set out one morning following the footsteps of her favourite young guide, Edward Biner, who was taking a party of climbers up the mountain.

'But she was not able to keep pace with the men and was soon left behind. At about midnight, Mitza gave another guide quite a nasty fright, for he took her at first for the ghost cat which is said to guard the treasure which lies hidden in the Lake of Schwarzsee at the foot of the Matterhorn. Meanwhile Josephine, the cook, realising that her beloved Mitza was missing, had sounded the alarm; and as the cook at the last outpost of civilisation is a very important personage, there was no lack of helpers. The first report came from the caretaker at the Solway Hut, 12,500 feet up the mountain, who informed the cook that Mitza had reached his hut.

'Of course nobody expected the cat to go any further, so no special precautions were taken to keep her at the Solway. But before the caretaker was up the following morning Mitza had set out again and climbed still higher. When night fell she bivouacked in a *couloir* above the shoulder. Next day she was seen by a group of climbers from Italy, who passed her, convinced that her climbing skill, if not her spirit,

would be defeated by the difficult rope slabs and the roof. But they were wrong! And some hours later the kitten reached the 14,780-foot-high summit of the Matterhorn, where she joined the incredulous mountaineers, who had passed her by in the rope slabs. With her tail up, and miauling with delight, or possibly hunger, she ran to the party, who naturally gave her a royal welcome. After all, nothing is too good for the first cat to climb the Matterhorn.

'The guide, who was an Italian, and was taking his party down the Italian side of the Matterhorn, did not want to abandon the kitten on top of the mountain, so took her in his rucksack, and brought her down to the first inhabited outpost on his side of the frontier. And Mitza is still there, happily fattening on mice. The other day she was recognised by a Swiss guide from Zermatt, who wanted to take her back with him, but the Italians refused to let her go. So it looks as if Josephine, the cook, will have to make the journey over the Matterhorn in person to claim her property, for there are not many people around the Matterhorn, be they Swiss or Italian, who can resist Josephine'.

(The Listener.)

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